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E.O. 12958: DECL: REUNIFICATION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA
TAGS: PREL ECON MARR KUNR AF IR IZ IN KN KS CH JA
SUBJECT: THE AMBASSADOR'S LUNCH WITH ADMINISTRATIVE VICE
MINISTER YACHI

REF: STATE 83706

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (S) During a May 26 meeting, Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi expressed deep appreciation for the Ambassador's efforts on the abduction issue. In a tour d'horizon, the Ambassador and Yachi discussed the upcoming summit, regional issues, realignment and beef. Foreign Minister Aso's meetings in Qatar with Chinese Minister Li and South Korean Minister Ban went very well. China and South Korea are hoping that Koizumi's successor refrains from visiting Yasukuni Shrine, but Yachi fears that Koizumi will visit the Shrine on August 15 this year. Turning to UNSC reform, Yachi requested a response to Japan's "Model D" proposal as soon as possible. The Ambassador delivered our demarche on the Kandahar-Herat Road (reftel) and Yachi agreed to consider various options. The Ambassador briefed Yachi on North Korea and Yachi requested a follow-up intelligence briefing. On beef, Japan is determined to have, at least, a decision to reopen the market before the summit. On Iraq, Yachi said he does not want Japan to disappear from the list of cooperative countries. Japan wants to stand with the United States, even if it is in a limited capacity. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Over lunch with the Ambassador on May 26, Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi expressed deep appreciation for the Ambassador's visit to Niigata and for facilitating the meeting between the President and Sakie Yokota, the mother of a Japanese citizen abducted by North Korea. Yokota is a powerful advocate, the Ambassador responded, and her story genuinely touched the President. Since his visit to Niigata, every time he has appeared before a Japanese audience, someone has approached him and thanked him for raising the profile of the abductions, the Ambassador commented.

Summit

¶3. (C) The Ambassador informed Yachi that over dinner on May 23, he told Prime Minister Koizumi that lunch was part of the package and urged him to participate. Koizumi agreed to join the lunch, but said he did not want to deliver a speech before Congress. Yachi thanked the Ambassador for his advice about a visit to Walter Reed hospital. Yachi said the Prime

Minister was very enthusiastic about the idea. The Ambassador encouraged him to keep the idea quiet. The hospital visit will be emotionally tough but Americans and the troops will be very appreciative.

¶4. (C) Koizumi would like to deliver a speech at the state dinner and is writing almost the entire speech by himself, Yachi stated. He wants to convey his appreciation for the President's leadership and friendship. Koizumi shared the key elements with the Foreign Ministry and Yachi predicted it would be a moving presentation. Koizumi does not like public speaking. Last year, Koizumi agreed to speak at the UN General Assembly but ordered the Foreign Ministry to keep his speech as short as possible. Koizumi is not an eloquent speaker and may be a little shy, Yachi commented. Surprised, the Ambassador pointed out that Koizumi is a very effective public speaker during campaigns. Yachi agreed, but also relayed Koizumi's reluctance to have even phone conversations with his counterparts. He is never enthusiastic about the calls, but once he gets on the phone he is a good communicator, Yachi affirmed.

China and Korea

¶5. (C) Yachi shared that Foreign Minister Taro Aso's meetings in Qatar with the Chinese Minister Li Zhaoxing and South Korean Minister Ban Ki-Moon went very well. Yachi had seen the official readouts and agreed with the media's interpretation that the Aso-Li meeting had been much "warmer" than Aso's meeting with Ban. Yachi suspected Li was actively being nice to Aso in case Aso became prime minister later this year. For his part, Aso made it a point to say he would decide whether or not to visit Yasukuni Shrine based on his

own beliefs and official position. Finally, Yachi contended, the Chinese seem to understand Aso's subtle message.

¶6. (C) Yachi visited China and South Korea three weeks ago and stated that both countries are looking to the post-Koizumi era. They are trying to avoid a visit to Yasukuni Shrine by Koizumi's successor. It is quite obvious that China has embarked on a "peace initiative," and is being especially careful not to criticize possible prime ministerial contenders. Both China and South Korea have told Yachi that they do not need a public promise that Koizumi's successor will not visit Yasukuni, they just want to ensure that the successor does not visit.

¶7. (C) Asked if he thought Koizumi would visit the Shrine on August 15 this year, Yachi replied, "I'm afraid so." Yachi has already warned his Chinese counterparts that an August 15 visit is a possibility. Minister Li is considering a visit to Japan before August, which would provide an opportunity for him to exchange views with Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe. Yachi is urging Li to visit, and has encouraged his counterparts to tone down their Yasukuni rhetoric and to avoid publicly criticizing prime ministerial contenders publicly. Yachi joked that his Chinese counterparts asked him to tell Abe to be careful of his "legs" and to warn Aso to watch his "tongue and legs," referring to his slips of the tongue and his visits to Yasukuni, respectively. (Comment: It appears as if the beginnings of a thaw in Sino-Japanese relations is occurring. Both sides seem to be staking out different positions in a post-Koizumi world than they have occupied in the past.)

Talks with South Korea

¶8. (C) Japan and South Korea have scheduled a round of talks on June 12-13 to discuss their exclusive economic zones and maritime surveys. The Blue House is maintaining a very tough position but the Korean diplomatic service is more accommodating. Despite taking a harsh position in public, South Korean diplomats are willing to work with Japan at the negotiating table, Yachi said. Last month, both sides reached an agreement on how to proceed, but they could not

agree on how to present their positions to the public.

¶19. (C) Referring to the heightened bilateral tensions in April, Yachi said the Koreans had decided to take into port any Japanese ships that approached the disputed area. It was an "incredible psychology" that the Koreans thought their national destiny depended on those tiny islands. It made no sense, Yachi insisted, because the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea subcommittee that would have considered the case in June requires a consensus decision and there is one Japanese member. Still, Japan would have had a weak case because it had no data with which to contest South Korea's claims. The Ambassador complimented Yachi on helping to defuse the situation and commented again that it would be a shame if two strong American allies came to blows over such an issue.

UNSC Reform

¶10. (C) In his meeting with Secretary Rice, Aso previewed Japan's "Model D" formula for UNSC reform. Yachi requested a response as soon as possible. Deputy Vice Foreign Minister Masaharu Kono will travel to the United States on June 16 and is hoping to meet with Undersecretary Burns to discuss the idea. Japan would like a concrete formula in place before the President and Prime Minister meet in late June. The Ambassador promised to convey the request, and assured Yachi that the United States fully supports Japan in its quest for a permanent seat.

Global Issues

¶11. (C) During a recent visit to the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Poland, Yachi was surprised at their dedication to the rule of law and democracy. Describing himself as "sympathetic to their cause," Yachi said that Japan is hoping to become more involved in the region and encouraged the United States and the European Union (EU) to follow suit. Japan is interested in joining various regional conferences, including the Vilnius Conference, the Community for Democratic Choice and the Black Sea Conference. Japan will host a Central Asia plus 1 conference for foreign ministers next month in Tokyo.

Kandahar-Herat and Aceh Roads

¶12. (S) The Ambassador delivered our demarche on the Kandahar-Herat Road (reftel), stressing that time is of essence in completing the road. He asked Yachi to consider alternatives to restarting construction, including contracting the job to non-Japanese organizations like the Army Corps of Engineers. The Ambassador assured Yachi that we are determined that Japan get full credit for the road, but reiterated the urgency of the situation. Yachi agreed to consider various options.

¶13. (C) The Ambassador also raised the Aceh Road between Calang to Meulaboh, informing Yachi about the 40-km stretch where Japan and the United States risk duplicating efforts by building parallel roads. He urged Japan to consider working with the United States to build one road together. Yachi, surprised, wholeheartedly agreed that we should avoid wasting time and money. He promised to follow up on it.

North Korea

¶14. (S) The U.S. intelligence community is split on whether North Korea will launch a Taepodong '2 missile, the Ambassador stated. It is possible that North Korea could launch a missile within the week. The United States is monitoring the situation closely and is regularly sharing information with Japan. Nevertheless, the Ambassador pushed Yachi to coordinate a unified response in case North Korea

does launch a missile. He raised a second facility of concern, further South, where we have detected activity that might involve Nodong or Scud missiles. The Ambassador invited Yachi to call him if he has questions, and offered to arrange an intelligence briefing if he so desired. Yachi said he would like to receive a briefing.

Beef

¶15. (C) The Japanese government is very close to an agreement on beef, Yachi assured the Ambassador. Before the summit in Washington, Japan is determined to have, at least, a decision to reopen the market. Yachi predicted that the market would reopen in July. Describing it as a constant source of irritation, the Ambassador pressed for resolution as soon as possible. Yachi agreed, adding that Japan does not want the beef issue to mar the summit. Yachi explained that there would be Risk Communications at 10 locations in Japan between June 1-14, another round of bilateral coordination, an audit of the approved plans and, finally, the resumption of beef imports from facilities that pass the audit. The Ambassador offered to talk with Agriculture Minister Jiro Kawasaki if it would help move the process along. Yachi promised to alert the Ambassador to any possible stumbling blocks that would inhibit a solution before the June summit.

Iran

¶16. (C) The Ambassador raised Iran and thanked Japan for its support. Acknowledging that it is a sensitive issue, the Ambassador stressed the importance of speaking with one voice. Yachi assured the Ambassador that there is no substantial difference between the Japanese and U.S. positions. The United States might want to move a little faster on the issue than Japan does, but Japan is in sync with our opinion.

¶17. (C) Yachi thanked the Ambassador for U.S. support in trying to include Japan in the EU3 plus 3 group. His EU

interlocutors see no problem with Japan's participation, but China is opposed to it, Yachi complained. The Chinese claim that they are not against Japan's participation in principle, but worry that if Japan is allowed to join the EU3 plus 3 group, it would make it harder to deny other countries entry into other exclusive discussions such as the Six-Party Talks.

Kitty Hawk and DPRI

¶18. (C) On Kitty Hawk replacement, the Ambassador warned that we are running out of time to extract an agreement from Yokosuka Mayor Kabaya. Yachi agreed and said he would pass the message. On the Cabinet decision on realignment, Yachi expressed some concern. There have been no new developments, but Okinawa Governor Inamine is trying to backtrack from his agreements. The Ambassador relayed that both Defense Chief Nukaga and Prime Minister Koizumi assured him that they will secure a Cabinet agreement and Yachi said he would keep pushing the issue.

India

¶19. (C) The Ambassador noted that Assistant Secretary for South Asia Boucher would be in Tokyo the following week and Yachi asked to meet with him. Yachi was scheduled to brief Koizumi and Abe on Japan's relations with India and hoped to see A/S Boucher before his briefing. Turning to the U.S. - India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative, Yachi asked for understanding. Japan is burdened by two considerations: the strategic importance of India and Japan's non-proliferation principles. The non-proliferation angle is making it difficult for Japan to come out and directly support the initiative. In fact, even Koizumi would find it difficult to

support the issue during his meeting with the President.

¶20. (C) The Ambassador asked Yachi to consider greater cooperation with India, in a multilateral context. The United States, Japan, Australia and India are big, regional democracies and might benefit from greater coordination. Yachi noted that Abe is supportive of that idea and suggested we look into organizing a foreign minister meeting among the four countries before bumping it up to higher levels. Yachi said he believed his government would be "very enthusiastic" about greater cooperation between the four countries. Both Yachi and the Ambassador agreed to convey the idea to the relevant officials.

Iraq

¶21. (C) Yachi welcomed the formation of the new Iraqi government. Japan is still coordinating with the United Kingdom and Australia on timing for withdrawal but is determined to avoid the image of "running away." If the situation is stable, Japan is interested in removing its ground forces but plans to provide more air support. Even if Japan withdraws its ground forces, it hopes to keep an individual officer in the region, possibly to act as an advisor to a PRT. The officer would be stationed in Kuwait but would take "long trips" in Iraq; he would spend two months in Iraq and two weeks in Kuwait, Yachi suggested. Frankly speaking, Yachi said he does not want Japan to disappear from the list of cooperative countries. Japan wants to stand with the United States, even if it is in a limited capacity.

East Asia Summit

¶22. (C) Yachi asked if the United States would consider joining the East Asia Summit (EAS) as an observer. The Ambassador shared the U.S. concerns that certain countries were interested in excluding the United States from the EAS, and that the EAS could detract from APEC. Yachi expressed understanding but said that even if Malaysia or China tried to keep the United States out, we still had friends in Australia, Japan and India. Yachi said he had been invited to visit Washington, DC from July 12-15 by Deputy National Security Advisor Crouch and hoped to raise many of these

issues with U/S Burns during his stay.

SCHIEFFER